

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LUANDA 00513 021819Z

62

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 EB-11 OMB-01 SAM-01 SIL-01 LAB-06

COME-00 TRSE-00 DRC-01 /173 W

----- 111187

R 021315Z JUL 74

FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2744

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 0513

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EGEN PINT PFOR MILI TP

SUBJECT: SAO TOME - TROUBLE BREWS

1. SUMMARY. SAO TOME IS TROPICAL PARADISE, IN DEEP TROUBLE POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY FOLLOWING APRIL 25 COUP IN PORTUGAL. NO REAL GOVERNMENT SINCE COUP; RESENTFUL BLACKS; FEARFUL WHITES; PERPLEXED MILITARY. INDEPENDENCE ACCEPTED AS INEVITABLE, WITH PREDICTIONS OF FUTURE ECONOMIC COLLAPSE. NO INTEREST IN UNION WITH ANY OTHER STATE. SAO TOME MAY BE FIRST COLONY TO BE INDEPENDENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THESE ARE IMPRESSIONS GAINED DURING THREE-DAY VISIT (JUNE 25-28) TO MAIN ISLAND OF SAO TOME. (PRINCIPE IS VIRTUALLY INACCESSIBLE; HAS ONLY TEN PERCENT OF ESTIMATED TOTAL POPULATION OF 70,000.)

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LUANDA 00513 021819Z

3. POLITICAL.

A. WHITES. 2,500, MOSTLY CIVIL SERVANTS FROM PORTUGAL, PLUS HANDFUL OF WHITE MANAGERS OF PLANTATIONS WHOSE OWNERS WITH ONE (RPT ONE) EXCEPTION STAY IN LISBON. FOLLOWING COUP THEY TRIED TO FORM SEPARATIST PARTY, BUT ATTEMPT FAILED. NO LEADERS. SINCE GOVERNOR RETURNED TO LISBON RIGHT AFTER COUP THEY ARE LEADERLESS. GOVERNMENT IS TEMPORARILY IN HANDS OF LOW-RANK BUREAUCRAT WHOSE CAREER HAS BEEN CONFINED TO THE MINOR LEAGUES. HE SPENT YEARS IN TIMOR BEFORE COMING TO SAO TOME IN 1972. FEAR DOMINATES WHITES AND FULL-SCALE ARRANGEMENTS REPORTEDLY UNDERWAY FOR MOST TO DEPART IN NEAR FUTURE. SEVERAL EMPTY HOUSES. MANAGER OF ONLY DOWNTOWN HOTEL AMONG THOSE LEAVING.

B. BLACKS NUMBER 50,000 SPLIT INTO THREE MUTUALLY HOSTILE GROUPS. ONLY TWO ARE ACTIVE POLITICALLY. (THIRD GROUP, THE ANGOLARES, ARE PRIMITIVE FISHERMEN DESPISED BY ALL.) TWO PARTIES ARE MOVEMENT FOR LIBERATION OF SAO TOME/PRINCIPE - MPLS, MODELED ON ANGOLA'S MPLA. LEADER PINTO DA CRUZ BELIEVED TO BE IN LIBREVILLE STILL, BUT LIEUTENANTS ARE NOW RETURNING TO ISLANDS; AND POPULAR LIBERATION FRONT - FLP, WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE THE EDGE ON ORGANIZING URBAN BLACKS AROUND SAO TOME CITY, ESPECIALLY ACTIVE IN LABOR. LEADERS ARE YOUNG, MOSTLY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS PLUS A FEW UNIVERSITY STUDENTS JUST BACK FROM LISBON.

C. OTHERS. THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 10,000 NATIVE MESTIZOS, WHO BELONG TO NO GROUP NOR ARE THEY ORGANIZED SEPARATELY. THEIR STANDARD AND STYLE OF LIVING APPEARS IDENTICAL TO THAT OF BLACKS. (THIS IS GENERALLY MUCH SUPERIOR TO ANGOLA. LITERACY FOR ALL GROUPS SAID TO BE NEAR 85 PERCENT THROUGHOUT ISLAND.) LAST CENSUS LISTED 12,000 FROM "OTHER PROVINCES" - MOSTLY CAPE VERDEANS. AMONG THESE, MANY HAVE ALREADY LEFT TO TAKE MORE LUCRATIVE JOBS IN PORTUGAL, AND REST HAVE INDICATED INTENTION TO FOLLOW SOON.

3. ECONOMIC. CRISIS IS ACUTE. CHIEF CAUSE IS SCARCITY OF LABOR TO WORK PLANTATIONS, MOSTLY CACAU (ONLY 10,000 TONS EXPORTED IN 1973. FIGURES SHOW STEADY DECLINE OVER PAST FEW YEARS). HISTORICALLY PORTUGUESE IMPORTED FIRST SLAVES, THEN FORCED LABORERS FROM ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE; AND ATTRACTED STARVING CAPE VERDEANS. ANGOLAN WORKERS CEASED COMING IN 1948 (BECAUSE OF

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LUANDA 00513 021819Z

DOMESTIC NEEDS HERE); AND LABOR CRISIS WHICH FOLLOWED LED DIRECTLY TO MASSACRES IN 1953 ATTENDING EFFORTS BY LOCAL WHITES TO FORCE NATIVE SANTOMENSES TO WORK PLANTATIONS. FACTS ABOUT INCIDENTS WHICH MAY HAVE CAUSED AS MANY AS 1,000 DEATHS CURRENTLY BEING ASSEMBLED BY SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR FROM LISBON, WHOSE JOB IS TO CLEAR RECORD, AND REASSURE BLACKS. WITH WHITES GOING, AND INSUFFICIENT LABOR TO WORK PLANTATIONS, SAO TOME'S PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME APPEARS LIKELY TO DISAPPEAR. TO COMPLICATE

MATTERS WORKERS WENT OUT ON STRIKE JUNE 24, FOLLOWING DEPARTURE JUNE 23 OF ALL DGS AGENTS (WHO WERE EVACUATED BY SPECIAL AIRCRAFT SENT FOR PURPOSE). TO MOLLIFY THEM DAILY BASE WAGE WAS RAISED FROM EQUIVALENT OF US\$1.12 TO \$2.40. THIS UNACCEPTABLE TO FLP. PLANTATION MANAGERS SAY THIS IS CRITICAL PERIOD REQUIRING INTENSIVE CARE OF PLANTS, APPLICATION OF INSECTICIDES, ETC. FORESEE RUINED CROPS IF STRIKE PERSISTS. WITH PLANTATIONS CLOSED 10,000 NATIVE WORKERS WOULD LOSE JOBS.

4. MILITARY. THREE MFA OFFICERS VISITED ISLAND SHORTELY AFTER COUP. THEY ARE BLAMED FOR STIMULATING LABOR TROUBLES. MILITARY COMMAND (TWO BATTALIONS) TEMPORARILY IN HANDS OF YOUNG MAJOR (PERSONNEL AND BUDGET SPECIALIST), PENDING ARRIVAL OF LT COL TO REPLACE OFFICER WHO WAS REMOVED FOLLOWING COUP. MAJOR SAYS TROOP MORALE IS HIGH, CONSIDERING THEY HAVE LITTLE TO DO EXCEPT FRATERNIZE WITH NATIVES. SIXTY PERCENT OF TROOPS ARE NATIVES. OFFICERS ARE ALL PORTUGUESE. COMMANDER SAYS HIS ORDERS ARE NOT TO INTERFERE WITH CIVIL POPULACE BUT LET POLICE (NATIVES) HANDLE ANY DISTURBANCES. MILITARY, HOWEVER, HAVE TAKEN OVER DGS INTELLIGENCE FUNCTION AND COMMANDER ADMITTED HE WORRIED ABOUT DETERIORATING CIVILIAN MORALE THROUGHOUT TERRITORY, AND RECENT SPATE OF THREATS AGAINST WHITES HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR 1953 EVENTS.

5. NO ONE SEEMS TO SEE ANY ALTERNATIVE TO OUTRIGHT INDEPENDENCE. THERE ARE PLENTY OF SUFFICIENTLY EDUCATED NATIVES (REPORTEDLY) TO RUN THE PLACE, BUT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS APPEAR TO BE INSURMOUNTABLE IN NEAR TERM ANYWAY. TOURISM AND COMMERCIAL FISHING ABOUT ONLY CHANCE FOR LONG TERM ECONOMIC SURVIVAL UNLESS NATIVES WILLING TO SINK INTO NEAR INACTIVITY. (THAT IS ENTIRELY FEASIBLE: ISLAND IS ONE OF FEW PLACES ON EARTH WHERE RICH VARIETY OF FOOD IS READY TO BE PLUCKED FROM ITS NATURAL STATE.)

6. EVERYONE APPROACHED DISCOUNTS UNION WITH PORTUGAL, OR ANY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 LUANDA 00513 021819Z

AFRICAN MAINLAND STATE INCLUDING ANGOLA. NEVERTHELESS, I FOUND SOME INTEREST AMONG BLACKS IN WORK OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY BIG CITY LUANDA. (THE MODEST SANTOMENSE COMMUNITY HERE DOES EXTREMELY WELL, THANKS TO HIGH EDUCATIONAL LEVEL WHICH BETTER THAN MANY WHITES.) QUESTION OF WHETHER SAO TOME MIGHT LIKE TO JOIN CABINDA (80,000 INHABITANTS) IN MINI-FEDERATION AS RECENTLY PROPOSED BY A CABINDAN POLITICAN EVOKED LAUGHTER. IT MAY NOT BE EXAGGERATION TO PREDICT SAO TOME/PRINCIPE MAY BE FIRST PORTUGUESE COLONY TO TUMBLE INTO INDEPENDENCE.
BRIGGS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SAO TOME, DEPENDENCIES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: shawdg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LUANDA00513
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740175-1163
From: LUANDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740781/aaaacrmy.tel
Line Count: 164
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 MAY 2002 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <20 FEB 2003 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAO TOME - TROUBLE BREWS
TAGS: EGEN, PINT, PFOR, MILI, PDEV, TP
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005